

Wednesday, March 9, 2005

COMMITTEE APPROVES PERKINS REAUTHORIZATION; WILL HELP CLOSE ACADEMIC, TECHNICAL SKILLS GAP, ENZI SAYS

Washington, D.C. - The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee), today approved the reauthorization of the “Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act,” a bill that will “help close the gap that threatens America’s long-term competitiveness” by addressing the needs of our changing workforce and targeting federal funds for academic instruction and technical skills training in both secondary and postsecondary schools,” U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Chairman of the Committee, said today.

“Reauthorizing the Perkins Act will help strengthen our workforce and enable America to compete and succeed in the global economy,” Enzi said Wednesday. “This legislation will require state agencies to work together on identifying the needs of the workforce and in designing job and skills training programs to match those needs. More importantly, it will provide vital resources that are needed to prepare students of all ages for a lifetime of learning necessary to pursue high-wage and high-skilled occupations.”

S. 250, introduced by Enzi on February 1, also emphasizes the needs of non-traditional students and other lifelong learners, who are returning to school for the first time, or those who are seeking additional skill training.

“The American economy is in the midst of a skills revolution, making a quality education more important than ever,” Enzi added. “Some estimates suggest that 60 percent of the jobs created in the next decade will require skills that only 20 percent of workers today possess. The Perkins Act is a critical piece of a comprehensive effort to train American workers to fill the good jobs being created.”

S. 250 improves programs authorized under the Perkins Act by requiring:

- A More Effective Accountability System - that aligns accountability requirements with other federal education and training programs;
- Stronger Links to Businesses - that build stronger partnerships between high schools, colleges, and businesses, so they can better meet the needs of the workforce, including small businesses;
- Better Links from High School to College - that require states to outline a logical sequence of courses, including high school and college courses, that will lead to an industry recognized credential, certificate, or postsecondary degree;
- Stronger Academic Focus - that promotes an enhanced emphasis on academic instruction for federally supported career and technical education programs consistent with other federal education programs such as “No Child Left Behind.”

During Wednesday's mark-up, the HELP Committee also approved the following bills:

S. 544: the "Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act of 2005," a bill to permit caregivers to analyze the cause of medical errors - without fear of being sued and without compromising a patient's legal rights – in order to promote the development of interventions and solutions that ensure patient safety;

S.172: a DeWine - Kennedy bill to amend the "Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act" to provide for the regulation of all contact lenses, including non-corrective contact lenses for decorative use, as medical devices; and

S. 525: the "Caring for Children Act of 2005," a bill to reauthorize of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program and assist states in improving the quality of child care available to families.